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A Message from the President

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ACAP UPDATE

A Message from the President

Allen Marr (National President ACAP)

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Introduction

Welcome to the first ACAP Update in what I hope will be your first of many visits to this section of the eJournal. Ideally, this is where I hope to keep our readers informed of news and events taking place within the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) and also encourage your feedback and ideas for the eJournal and the profession.

As many of you are aware, the College has always pursued professional recognition for its members, which was the main reason behind the origin of The Institute of Ambulance Officers (Aust.) 1973 and which continues to this day.

Many of you may also be aware that a Review of the System of Regulation of Victoria's registered health professions commenced in 2002, led by the Victorian Department of Human Services. I have chosen to discuss this important issue as an opportunity to keep you informed of progress in this area and also to encourage your views on this, or any other professional issues which you would like to share with your colleagues. Please feel free to do so by using our [feedback](#) facility, sending a [Letter to the Editor](#), or by submitting a short article for the [Forum for Debate](#) on this topic to be published in the next issue of JEPHC.

It is also a pleasure to bring you news and developments about our Singapore paramedic exchange program, our International EMS Gold Medal Winners and the upcoming ACAP Conference in Alice Springs.

Professionalism – the current status

Currently, Registrant Acts cover eleven health professions in Victoria. Further information and access to the Review document can be found at http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/pdpd/workforce/pracreg/sys_review.htm.

There are also many health professions that are not subject to statutory registration but are self-regulating. The Ambulance profession throughout Australia does not fall into either category.

As an organization, we have contributed to education in the seventies, by facilitating the development of a national curriculum for the professional education of ambulance officers across Australia. This is not a widely recognized achievement, given the passage of time and the change in personnel. However, it was a significant contribution at that time and remains a part of the College's history.

For over thirty years the College has been involved in meetings and discussions on the subjects of registration, professional development and industry recognition. In 1994 the organization produced an "Outline on Proposed Registration of Ambulance Officers" which discussed the issues of a background to, and concepts of the proposal for registration. This document was presented in draft to the Convention of Ambulance Authorities (CAA) in Sydney during 1993. The "Statement of Purpose" read as follows:

'To register Ambulance Officers to practice their skills nationally under legislation protecting the public and the provider in any State or Territory of Australia according to the standards set by the CAA through the respective State or Territory authorities.'

The proposal included recommendations and was presented to the CAA, but has received little support given the complexities of a mechanism to implement this process.

In 2001, ACAP revisited its position on national registration of ambulance officers, including a process for establishment and implementation. This was again presented to the CAA for their consideration and deliberations. Although no great outcomes were forthcoming, the formation by the CAA of the Australian Ambulance Education Council (AAEC) in October 2001, was welcomed by the College. The major objective of the AAEC was, and is, to: *'Promote and support the education of competent Ambulance Officers through the development of national ambulance education standards'*. The College has a representative on the Council.

In the meantime, the College has pursued its own direction in developing a 'National Professional Recognition Program' (NPRP) for Ambulance Officers in Australia. We entered into an agreement with the Flinders University of South Australia, and gained tacit support from a number of ambulance statutory authorities for this program of self-development and voluntary regulation. However, important issues to Ambulance Officers nationally, such as 'portability of qualifications', 'right to practice' and 'registration/regulation' remain largely unanswered.

When the National Board of Directors became aware of the Victorian Review of Regulation of Health Practitioners, it decided to present a interim submission on behalf of our membership to the Review Panel. It was also resolved to pursue the process of voluntary self-regulation across the ambulance profession based on the utilization of a re-vamped **'National Professional Recognition Program'** across Australia. We believe our Constitution and direction lends itself to such an outcome.

On the invitation of the Monash University Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies (MUCAPS), in April 2004, the College took the opportunity to hold a national forum to discuss and investigate the various options for professional regulation. We were addressed by the Chairperson of the Review Panel in Victoria, and had a number of invited guests present for the forum. Five ACAP State Branches were represented, as was the CAA. A number of working groups discussed some of the relevant issues, which will shortly be compiled into a discussion paper for distribution to ACAP Branches for consideration.

The college will continue to seek input from all members as it continues to advance the professional recognition of its members throughout Australia.

Singapore Paramedic Exchange Program

In March 2003, the College, through a joint arrangement with the Singapore Civil Defence Forces (SCDF) and the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) organized an educational visit to Singapore. In line with the strategy to promote and foster international relationships with overseas paramedics, I am pleased to advise that a reciprocal visit from our colleagues in Singapore has taken place. Six paramedics from various regions in Singapore visited Queensland and enjoyed work experience and fellowship with our College members and QAS paramedics. An on-going international relationship has developed with Singapore and several other Southeast Asian countries, thanks to the visit by our National Secretary. ACAP now has several international members and receives regular enquiries on the process of joining the College.

Gold Medal Winning Australian Paramedics at the International EMS Olympics

On the subject of international affiliation and achievement, it is great to be able to inform members of the College and other colleagues, of the recent overseas success where an Australian team of Paramedics won the Gold Medal at an International EMS "Olympics" event. The Queensland sponsored team represented ACAP at the inaugural "Excellence in EMS" competition. This was conducted in conjunction with the 22nd Journal of Emergency Services (JEMS) Conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah over 2nd to 6th March 2004. Competing against ten EMS teams from across America, the Australian Paramedics were ecstatic at winning such a prestigious event, given the expertise of their rivals.

It is anticipated that the team will present a major paper at the ACAP conference in Alice Springs, as well as an article for the JEPHC for the information of College members and interested health care workers. The team looks forward to defending the title in the USA during 2005.

2004 ACAP National Conference

In conclusion, let me again remind everyone about the forthcoming conference in Alice Springs on the 10 –11 September 2004. A dedicated team in the Northern Territory is working towards the goal of providing a worthwhile Annual Conference. There are some additional College activities prior to the

Conference and a number of workshops have been organized. You may also like to take the opportunity of delivering a paper, as expressions of interest to speakers are still being called by the Conference organizers. An electronic link to the Conference which provides additional information can be found on the College website www.acap.org.au